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Press Freedom In Trials Backed

The general manager of the American Newspaper Publishers Association said here yesterday "there is no fundamental conflict" between the individual's right to a fair trial and the freedom of the press.

"History makes it clear that the independent power of the judiciary rests upon the moral support of an informed public," Stanford Smith, the ANPA official, said.

"It is the public's free access to knowledge of what happens inside the police station and the courtroom that spells a basic difference between star chamber justice and the American judicial system."

Smith commented on pre- and in-trial reporting as he accepted for the ANPA the 1967 National Commander's Award of the American Legion.

The luncheon presentation at the Statler-Hilton marked the opening of the Legion's five-day seventh annual Washington Conference.

The conference brings together some 1200 executives of the Legion's state departments and continuing commissions on national security, foreign relations, rehabilitation, legislation and economic matters. Policy developed here and at executive meetings in May will be presented to the Legion's national convention in August.

A highlight of today's agen-

da will be the appearance before the House Veterans Affairs Committee of National Commander John E. Davis on behalf of improved servicemen's benefits.

Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R-Ill.) will receive the Legion's Award for Distinguished Public Service at a banquet Wednesday.

Smith said American courts "are replete" with cases in which press access to criminal matters and court proceedings "has furthered—not impeded—the course of justice."

The American Bar Association report recommending "drastic restrictions" on information about accused persons is an "erosion of freedom . . . we fear and what every American should fear."

If the Constitution bars Congress from abridging free-speech freedoms, Smith said, it also prevents such actions by "judges, minor officials and demagogues of all political persuasions or personal preferences."

Davis presented the award for what he said "by and large" was an "excellent job of fair and factual presentation" of the news by the American press.